

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)



Disclaimer: No two individuals with ADHD are the same. Symptoms or even the severity of symptoms will not be the same. What works for one individual may not work for another.

Definition and Statistics (Mulligan, 2017)

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is characterized by on-going patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity
- Most common disorder among children and often continues into adolescence and adulthood
- Affects up to five million children
- Three subtypes or clinical presentations
 - ADHD Predominantly Inattentive
 - ADHD Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive
 - ADHD Combined
- Often occurs simultaneously with other disorders/conditions

Symptoms/Characteristics (Mulligan, 2017)

- Inattentive Symptoms
 - Difficulty with giving close attention to detail or makes careless mistakes (overlook mistakes or details)
 - Difficulty sustaining attention
 - Appears to not listen when spoken to
 - Difficulty with following through with instructions
 - Poor organization skills; loses necessary items
- Hyperactive-Impulsive Symptoms
 - Fidgets with hands, taps feet, or cannot sit still in chair
 - Often gets up from chair when expected to sit
 - Runs about or feels restless
 - Difficulty engaging in leisure activities
 - Talks excessively
 - Blurts out answers prior to completion of questions
 - Difficulty waiting or taking turns



Adaptation Considerations

*If youth needs reasonable accommodations, please work with county Extension staff. Details are outlined on the Reasonable Accommodation Practices website: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/reasonable-accommodation-practices>

- When making adaptations, try making the change for everyone, not just one individual. Do not single them out
- Set clear expectations and boundaries around the room or building. Collaborate with youth to have them develop these rules and expectations
- Be consistent and develop a routine
- Recognize and understand the youth's behavior is a means of communication
- Provide a schedule of activities. If the schedule needs to change, introduce it gradually
- Cut down on distractions (e.g. during judging day, have a separate room available to talk with the judge, if desired)
- Use visual aids such as a communication board with pictures of activities. First this, then that
- Provide breaks to allow for transitions, and announce transitions a couple of minutes before they happen
- Supply fidgets yet be careful as they can be another distractor
- Involve the youth during the meeting or when giving instructions (e.g. have them pass out materials)
- Use interests to motivate the youth
- Break down directions into smaller steps or give one step at a time
- Create a reward system for good behavior. Attention to "negative" behaviors will reinforce them
- Do not terminate a task because of a non-desired behavior, adjust the task or activity to create a challenge that is just right
- Create a space where the individual can go if they need a break from activities. Create an opportunity to self-regulate

Additional Resources

There are numerous websites that provide valuable information related to ADHD.

- The National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml>
- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): www.chadd.org
- The National Resource Center for ADHD: <http://www.help4adhd.org>

References

1. Mulligan, S. (2017). Attention deficit disorder. In B. J. Atchison & D. Powers Dirette (Eds.), *Conditions in occupational therapy* (pp. 84-94). Wolters Kluwer.

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